

NARRATIVE REPORT OF EMERGENCY EVACUATION OF C-47 16083

1. WE DEPARTED [FSN] AT APPROXIMATELY 0300Z 29 APRIL 1975 [WITH 33 PASSENGERS (AIR AMERICA EMPLOYEES AND FAMILIES, MIXED VN, CHINESE, AMERICAN AND FILIPINO) PLUS A CREW OF TWO - CAPTAINS FOOTE AND HUFF.]

2. SHORTLY AFTER TAKEOFF HEAVY SMOKE WAS NOTED COMING FROM THE RIGHT ENGINE. AT APPROXIMATELY 2000 FEET, A SLIGHT OIL FIRE DEVELOPED IN THE EXHAUST MANIFOLD SECTION AND THE ENGINE WAS FEATHERED. THE FIRE WENT OUT. WE PROCEEDED TO [CON SON ISLAND FOR POSSIBLE REPAIRS OR EVACUATION] ARRIVING THERE AT APPROXIMATELY 0430Z.

3. UPON ARRIVAL WE FOUND A PIECE OF ROCKET SHRAPNEL HAD DAMAGED A GUIDE NUT ON A PUSH-ROD, ALLOWING OIL TO BE PUMPED DIRECTLY OVERBOARD ON TO THE EXHAUST MANIFOLD, OUT OF THE DISTORTED NUT AND PUSH-ROD HOUSING. PRIMARILY AS A RESULT OF THE INGENUITY OF AIRCRAFT MECHANIC [C. Y. FEI (00167), WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF C. K. LOO (02921) AND C.C. SHIEH (06249)] ALL PASSENGERS ON OUR FLIGHT, EMERGENCY REPAIRS WERE EFFECTED ON THE PUSH-ROD. [THE PUSH-ROD NUT WHICH IS INTEGRALLY INSTALLED ON A NEW CYLINDER IN STOCK AT CON SON, WAS BROKEN OFF AND REINSTALLED ON OUR OLD PUSH-ROD. RUN-UP CHECKED OKAY.]

4. DURING OUR STAY AT [CON SON] AND DUE TO THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES ARRIVING BY VNAF AIRCRAFT, [MR. FORD] PREPARED FOR POSSIBLE ABANDONMENT OF THE AIRPLANE IF REPAIRS PROVED UNFEASIBLE. HE HAD 14 OF OUR PASSENGERS REMOVED [TO THE SHIPS BY A HELICOPTER FLOWN BY CAPTAINS OLSON AND GOODWIN.] [MR. FORD] DECIDED AND WE

APPROVED FOR
RELEASE DATE:
13-Mar-2009

AGREED THAT IT WAS NOT FEASIBLE TO TOP OFF OUR FUEL DUE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING MOBBED BY VN EVACUEES IF THE AIRPLANE APPEARED TO BE BEING PREPARED FOR DEPARTURE. WITH THE AIRCRAFT APPARENTLY DISABLED NO ONE BOTHERED US. BY THE TIME THE HELICOPTER RETURNED FOR THE SECOND LOAD OF PASSENGERS, WE WERE READY FOR RUN-UP. RUN-UP CHECKED OKAY, SO WE RE-EMBARKED OUR REMAINING PASSENGERS AND DEPARTED IMMEDIATELY FOR [BRUNEI] INSUFFICIENT FUEL REMAINED FOR A DIRECT FLIGHT TO [THE PHILLIPPINES OR HONG KONG] WE NOW HAD [THREE CHINESE EMPLOYEES, NINE FILIPINO EMPLOYEES, ONE VN EMPLOYEE PLUS 6 OF HER MINOR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.] WE DEPARTED [CON SON] AT APPROXIMATELY 0700Z AND ARRIVED [BRUNEI] AT APPROXIMATELY 1130Z.

5. DUE TO OUR LACK OF TRAVEL DOCUMENTS AND DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCE [ALTHOUGH WE HAD AIR-FILED VIA SINGAPORE] WE WERE DETAINED AT THE AIRPORT LOUNGE OVERNIGHT. HOWEVER, THE AIRPORT OFFICIALS, POLICE AND IMMIGRATION PERSONNEL WERE EXTREMELY COOPERATIVE, HELPFUL AND SOLICITOUS OF OUR WELFARE. FOOD WAS PROVIDED FREE, WE WERE GIVEN BLANKETS AND PILLOWS AND ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE FOR ME TO CASH A PERSONAL CHECK FOR AIRCRAFT EXPENSES THE FOLLOWING DAY. WE HAD DIFFICULTY REFUELING AND DID NOT RECEIVE FUEL/OIL UNTIL APPROXIMATELY 0500Z ON 30 APRIL. A FLIGHT PLAN WAS FILED FOR [CLARK AT 0900 LOCAL (0100Z)] AND TWO DELAY MESSAGES WERE FORWARDED PRIOR TO OUR DEPARTURE AT APPROXIMATELY 0500Z. SOME 400 GALLONS OF FUEL WAS ADDED. [BILLS AND EXPENSE ACCOUNT ARE ATTACHED AS ENCLOSURE (WERE SUBMITTED TO PERSONNEL)]

6. DESPITE OUR FLIGHT PLAN, SINCE WE HAD NO DIPLOMATIC

CLEARANCE, THE AIRCRAFT AND CREW WERE IMPOUNDED UPON ARRIVAL [CLARK BY THE FILIPINO GOVERNMENT] WE ARRIVED [CLARK AT APPROXIMATELY 1030Z] OUR VN PASSENGERS WERE IMMEDIATELY DEPLANED AND SENT ABOARD A [WAITING C-130] AND WERE ENROUTE [GUAM] WITHIN [30 MINUTES OF OUR ARRIVAL]

7. WE WERE REQUESTED TO MAKE A STATEMENT TO THE FIRST AIR DIVISION AS TO THE REASON FOR OUR ARRIVAL [CLARK] WITHOUT PROPER CLEARANCE. THIS WAS FORWARDED VIA THE U.S. EMBASSY. A COPY OF THIS STATEMENT IS ATTACHED. WE WERE FINALLY CLEARED TO CONTINUE TO [TAINAN ON SATURDAY 3 MAY 1975] [CLARK OPERATIONS PERSONNEL, PARTICULARLY THE CLARK OPERATIONS OFFICER, MAJOR BRANSON] WERE EXTREMELY HELPFUL THROUGHOUT. [COLONEL LEGARIO] OF THE [PHILLIPINE MILITARY LIAISON OFFICE] WAS ALSO MOST HELPFUL AND EXPEDITED OUR CLEARANCE AS BEST HE COULD. IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF GETTING THROUGH THE NORMAL RED TAPE OF AN UNANNOUNCED ARRIVAL. INASMUCH AS THE [CHINESE AND FILIPINO EMPLOYEES] HAD NO FUNDS EXCEPT VN PIASTERS, SOME \$120.00 IN EXPENSES WERE ACCRUED BY MYSELF IN THEIR BEHALF. THE FILIPINOS WERE RELEASED ON 1 MAY AND ALLOWED TO CONTINUE [TO THEIR HOMES]

8. WE DEPARTED [CLARK] AT APPROXIMATELY [0315Z 3 MAY 1975] AND ARRIVED IN [TAINAN] ROUTINELY AT APPROXIMATELY 0615Z. TICKETS WERE PROVIDED TO [TAIPEI] BY AIR AMERICA REPRESENTATIVE AND [TAIPEI TO HONG KONG BY POWELL WONG] WHO MET US AT THE AIRPORT [TAIPEI] WITH TICKETS IN HAND. HE ALSO ARRANGED FREE EXCESS BAGGAGE ON [CATHAY] FOR THE FIVE EXTRA BAGS WE WERE CARRYING FOR AIR AMERICA EMPLOYEES NOT ONBOARD OUR AIRCRAFT. THE RETURN TICKET [HKG/TPE] WAS SUBMITTED TO PERSONNEL. WE ARRIVED [HONG KONG VIA CX-523] AROUND 1500Z 3

MAY 1975.

9. WE DEPARTED WITHOUT AN OPERATIONS ORDER, SO A RE-CONSTRUCTION OF BLOCK/FLIGHT TIMES IS ATTACHED.

10. IN RE-READING THE ABOVE IT IS NOTED THAT I FAILED TO MENTION [TONY LIBUT IN OUR CLARK OFFICE] [TONY] WAS HELPFUL THROUGHOUT AND PROVIDED ALL THE ASSISTANCE HIS LIMITED FACILITIES ALLOWED.

[CAPT. WILLIAM H. HUFF]
AIR AMERICA, INC.

29 APRIL 1975

LAST TRIP FROM V-1 TO HANCOCK ON 004. (1845L).

30 APRIL - 3 MAY (0900L)

DEPARTED HANCOCK WITH 04X TO SUBIC POINT. FLIGHT TIME 0 +30.

LATE TAKEOFF DUE ENGINE TROUBLE.

3 MAY (0930)

BUS TO GYM.

1700

TO NAS. C47 TO MANILA. TO CARLSTON HOTEL. SUPPER \$5.00.

4 MAY

BREAKFAST 0800 \$1.00. TAXI TO AIRPORT AND TIPS PESO 10.

1200

LUNCH \$1.00. PAN AMERICAN FLIGHT TO HONG KONG.

ARRIVED HKG 1730.

DINNER \$3.00.

CHECKED INTO SHERATON HOTEL (1830L).

CAPT. J. E. HUNTER
AIR AMERICA, INC. }

2 May 1975

To : Commanding General, 1st Air Division, Philippine Air Force
From: William H. Huff, Capt. Air America, Inc. C-47 16083
Via : U. S. Embassy, Manila

Subj: Arrival Clark A/B on Emergency Evacuation flight 30 April 1975

1. Due to the deteriorating military situation in Viet Nam, all pilots were briefed regarding possibility of Emergency evacuation flight, carrying Air America employees, out of Viet Nam. This briefing advised pilots to plan on flying to Tainan, Taiwan via Hong Kong, Manila, Clark, Brunei or Singapore - depending on gas lead at departure. We were advised that all stations had been alerted for our possible arrival and would accept an "in-air filed flight plan."

2. At approximately 1100 on 29 April the situation in Saigon had reached the point where immediate evacuation was obviously required. Our base, Tan Son Nhut was under heavy rocket, mortar and artillery bombardment. Many aircraft were burning on the field. VNAF personnel were attempting to individually commandeer our aircraft at gub point. Four helicopters were taken by unknown parties off the ICSS ramp (about a half mile distant from the office). At this point we were told to evacuate the aircraft, with as many Air America personnel as we could load, immediately, by our Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Velte. Our aircraft loaded 33 mixed Chinese, Filipino and Viet Namese employees and departed. Shortly after take-off I was advised we were trailing heavy smoke, and shortly thereafter a small fire developed in the right engine. We feathered this engine over Saigon and continued. At this point we had had no destination, but the engine difficulty left only one alternative that we could make in semi-safety - Con Son island, a Vietnamese island about 150 miles south of Saigon in the South China Sea. (A small emergency maintenance facility had been established there by the company for precisely this kind of a situation.) With our load we were only able to maintain 1500 feet and had to pull more than maximum allowable continuous power (MCTO). Our gas consumption precluded any previously briefed destination.

3. On arrival Con Son, it was determined our problem was the result of shrapnel damage to a push-rod guide packing gland nut. It had been distorted allowing oil to be pumped directly on to the exhaust. Con Son airstrip is designed for a maximum of four small aircraft. Two C#119 aircraft were disabled on the west end of the runway, and some 10 or 12 other aircraft were on the field mostly stuck in the sand off both sides of the runway. And more aircraft were circling the field. Some 800 or 900 Vietnamese refugees had been brought in and were awaiting transportation out, by whatever means, on the field. A near-panic situation existed here, however, there was no war.

4. The mechanics on board our aircraft were able to locate a cylinder, remove the damaged part on our plane, and replace it with a part from the spare cylinder. In the meantime, an Air America helicopter arrived, and our station manager decided to evacuate my passengers to 7th Fleet ships in case I was unable to depart due to the maintenance problem, or field congestion. One lead was taken out, but on the helicopter's return the engine was repaired, so we took off with the remaining 19 passengers - 9 Filipino, 7 Vietnamese and 3 Chinese. The Vietnamese consisted of one female employee and six of her younger brothers and sisters.

5. After departing Con Son east a quick review of our gas remaining made the decision to go to Brunei. We had insufficient fuel to go anywhere else. We filed in the air via Singapore, however, Brunei never received our flight plan and were not aware of our pending arrival until we contacted their Approach Control about one hour out.

6. Upon arriving Brunei we were met by Immigration, Customs and Police officials. Since we had no visas for Brunei, and the Vietnamese passengers had no travel documents at all, we had to remain in the airport lounge all night. However, it was very comfortable, the people treated us exceedingly well, and all the officials did their utmost to expedite and assist our departure. All Hands were most appreciative of the Brunei people for their treatment and assistance.

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7. I filed a Flight Plan for Clark Air Base with the Brunei International Airport Clearance people at approximately 0830/0900 local time. Clark was chosen over Manila since we had a company office there, we had been there on many prior occasions, our Philippine personnel had no funds except Vietnamese currency, the Vietnamese evacuation center was there - and it was directly on route to our final destination at Tainan. I knew that Manila could accept, deny or change that destination if they so desired. Brunei filed the flight plan around 0900 and sent two subsequent delay messages due our refueling problem. We were filed Clark via Kinabalu, ADR B-61, Grouper (ADIZ), B-91 Lubang, T23 Clark to cruise 9000. I specifically asked the Airport Manager if our clearance was approved around 1200 local. He stated that it had been filed, no denial or query had been received, so it was cleared. Brunei gave us our clearance and we departed at approximately 1315 local. (Philippine Liaison Office holds my copy.)

8. We contacted Manila Control at the Philippine ADIZ, and made regular reports to them until they cleared us to Clark Control over Lubang. There was no indication by Manila Control of any problem at any time. They handled all the reports in a completely routine manner.

9. After we got under the control of Clark Approach, some questions were asked by them indicating they were not aware of our flight. But they cleared us to land. Not until we were on the ground at Clark did I find out a clearance problem apparently existed.

10. When we departed Brunei we had to choose a destination. Clark seemed an obvious choice for the reasons enumerated above, i.e. Filipino nationals without money or visas, a company office located there, the VN evacuation center, plus our friendly relations with the Philippine Government. Having filed a Flight Plan four hours in advance, and having been cleared by Brunei to Clark, the whole flight seemed a routine affair.

11. If I created any problem by my decision, I am exceedingly sorry, but there was simply no doubt in my mind that we were properly cleared.

Very Respectfully,

William H. Huff
William H. Huff
Capt. Air American 16083]